SUICIDE SQUAD™

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NIGHTSHADE™
ODYSSEY PART 1
by OSTRANDER & McDONNELL

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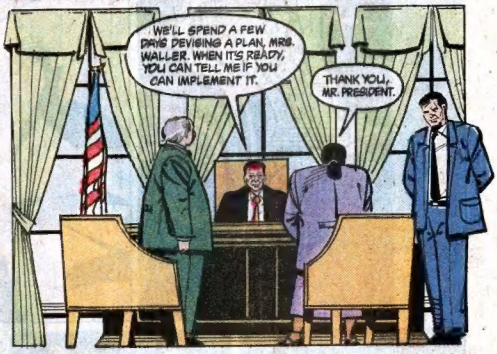
WHERE I SHOULD BE IS BACK AT BELLE REVE, DISSECTING THOSE BOZOS FOR THAT UNAUTHORIZED RESCUE MISSION INTO RUSSIA AND THAT WHOLE MESS WITH THE JLI!*
INSTEAD I'M SUMMONED TO THE OVAL OFFICE, PROBABLY FOR A CHEWING OUT. MYSELF FOR WHAT FLAG AND HIS TRIBE OF IDIOTS PULLED!
I AM NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS. I HATE THE TASTE OF CROW!
* ISSUE 13 OF BOTH SUICIDE SQUAD AND JLI.--HISTORIAN BOB
WHO THE HELL'S THAT WITH THE PRESIDENT? I THOUGHT WE WERE SUPPOSED TO DISCUSS THIS IN PRIVATE.
YOU WANTED TO SEE ME, MR. PRESIDENT?
OH YES! CLOSE THE DOOR AND SIT DOWN, MRS. WALLER.
DO YOU KNOW SENATOR JOE CRAY?
OH YEAH. HEARD THE WORDS "CORRUPTION" AND "PAYOFF" A LOT IN CONNECTION WITH THAT NAME.
NOTHING INDICTABLE.
YOU'LL GET TO KNOW HIM A LOT BETTER IN THE COMING WEEKS, MRS. WALLER.
YOU AND YOUR SUICIDE SQUAD ARE GOING TO HELP HIM GET RE-ELECTED.
THE HELL WE ARE!

THE HELL YOU WON'T!
MR. PRESIDENT, A LIST WAS WORKED UP OF THOSE SENATORS WITH A "NEED TO KNOW" OF THE SQUAD'S EXISTENCE AND THIS JERK'S NAME WASN'T ON IT AND WITH GOOD REASON!
WHY TELL HIM NOW?!
THE PRESIDENT DIDN'T.
I DID.
TOLLIVER!
MRS. WALLER! SIT DOWN!
IF ANYONE IS GOING TO SPILL BLOOD IN THIS OFFICE, IT'S GOING TO BE ME!
I DON'T LIKE THIS, EITHER, BUT THEY'VE THREATENED FULL DISCLOSURE TO THE PRESS IF YOU DON'T CO-OPERATE.
AND I DON'T INTEND TO HAVE MY PRESIDENCY'S PLACE IN HISTORY TAINTED BECAUSE OF YOUR HARE-BRAINED SCHEME.
MR. PRESIDENT, WHEN YOU AUTHORIZED TASK FORCE X IT WAS UNDERSTOOD WE WOULD UNDERTAKE NO DOMESTIC POLITICAL MISSIONS.
3

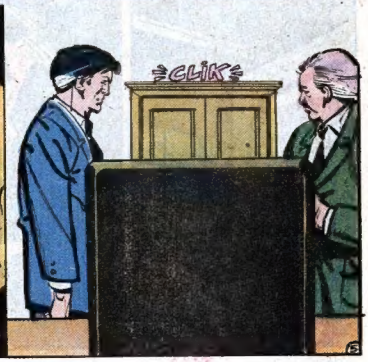
YOU MEAN, LIKE THE WILLIAM HELL MISSION?*
*SQUAD #4. -- BOB
NOW, NOW, MR. TOLLIVER. WE ALL UNDERSTAND MRS. WALLER'S CAVEATS AND HER HIGH PRINCIPLES.
IF YOU FEEL YOU CAN'T IN GOOD CONSCIENCE COMPLY WITH MY ORDERS, MRS. WALLER, I'LL RELUCTANTLY ACCEPT YOUR RESIGNATION.
IN OTHER WORDS, IF I DON'T GO ALONG WITH THIS, YOU'LL REPLACE ME WITH SOMEONE WHO WILL.
YOU.
ME.
WELL, MRS. WALLER?

I...I NEED TO THINK IT OVER...
YOU DON'T HAVE TO THINK, WOMAN! YOUR PRESIDENT GAVE YOU AN ORDER! ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS EXECUTE IT!

YOUR PRESIDENT IS GIVING YOU AN ORDER, CRAY! SHUT UP!

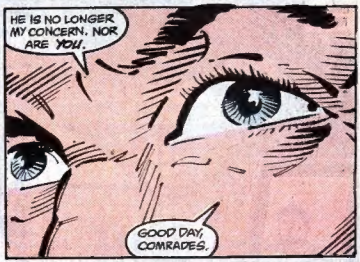

WE'LL SPEND A FEW DAYS DEVISING A PLAN, MRS. WALLER. WHEN IT'S READY, YOU CAN TELL ME IF YOU CAN IMPLEMENT IT.
THANK YOU, MR. PRESIDENT.

IT'LL BE GOOD TO HAVE YOU WORKING UNDER ME AGAIN, WALLER.

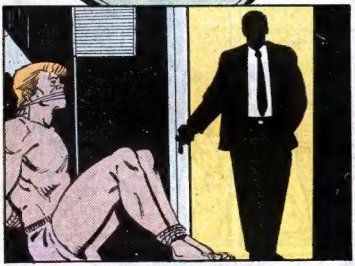

CLIK

THE JLI RUSSIAN EMBASSY.
KGB. TAKE US TO EMBASSY CHIEF, BORIS DMITRAVICH RAZUMIHIN!
A PRISONER WAS STOLEN FROM OUR FACILITIES IN THE EAST AND TAKEN HERE.*
WE REQUIRE YOU TO SURRENDER HIM TO US IMMEDIATELY.
*NEMESIS. --BOB
THIS IS AN EMBASSY AND WE ARE NOT REQUIRED TO OBEY YOU.
THE POINT, HOWEVER, IS MOOT. WHO YOU SEEK IS NO LONGER HERE. WE INVITE YOU TO LOOK FOR YOURSELVES.
WE SHALL!

ALL RIGHT. WHERE IS HE?

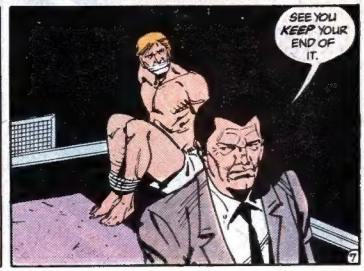

HE IS NO LONGER MY CONCERN. NOR ARE YOU.
GOOD DAY, COMRADES.

THEY WILL NOT LIKE THIS DOWN AT HEADQUARTERS.
HUSH!



LISTEN TO ME.
YOU ARE FEODOR ILLYICH TOOZENBACH. BESIDES YOUR LEGAL ACTIVITIES, YOU DO A SIGNIFICANT BLACK MARKET BUSINESS OF WHICH YOUR SUPERIORS ARE NOT AWARE.

IN 24 HOURS, THE MAN WHO TOOK YOUR FACE AND CLOTHES WILL BE OUT OF THE COUNTRY AND YOU WILL BE SET FREE.
YOU TELL OUR SECRET, WE TELL YOURS. UNDERSTOOD?
MM-HMM!


SEE YOU KEEP YOUR END OF IT.

LOOK, WE'LL DRAW THE LINE AT HER ACTUALLY KILLING YOU. WE ALL AGREED ON THAT?
JOKE! JUST A JOKE!
RRRRINGG!
FLO? MURPH.
THE WALL JUST DROVE IN AT THE FRONT GATE.

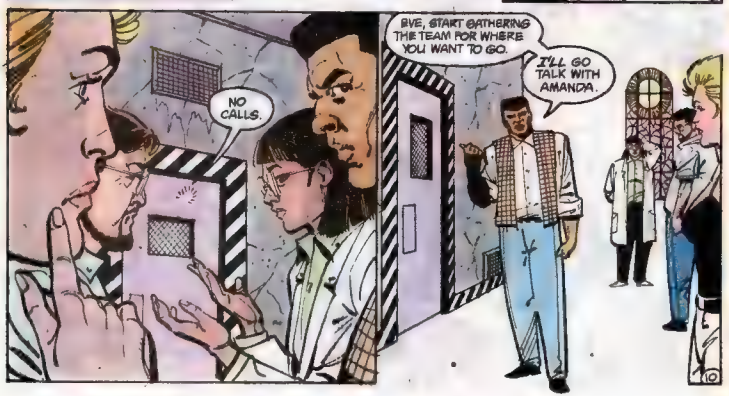
MRS. WALLER'S ARRIVED.
DAMMIT! WHAT ARE WE BEING SO NERVOUS ABOUT?!
THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS WE SHOULD HAVE TRIED TO RESCUE NEMESIS SOONER THAN WE DID AND THE ONLY REASON THINGS WENT BAD WAS BECAUSE WALLER CALLED THE JUSTICE LEAGUE DOWN ON US!
YOU, ME, AND COLONEL FLAG ARE STILL GOING TO CATCH HELL FOR IT, EVE. WE WERE THE MISSION LEADERS.
THE OTHERS DIDN'T KNOW THE MISSION WASN'T AUTHORIZED. WE DID. SO WE TAKE THE HEAT FOR IT.
IF BATMAN HADN'T ALREADY PUT THE COLONEL INTO THE HOSPITAL, I'M AFRAID MRS. WALLER WOULD.
I'M SICK OF MRS. WALLER AND HER TANTRUMS! MAYBE IT'S TIME I QUIT THIS...
OPERATIONS

I'LL BE IN M'OFFICE, JOHN.

OH--MISS ED'EN? ABOUT THAT PRIVATE MISSION WE OWE YOU?
CAN YOU BE READY TO GO TOMORROW MORNING?

UHHH--YEAH, I GUESS. SURE.

Y'ALL HAVE T'WORK FROM AVAILABLE CREW. TELL 'EM IT'S OPTIONAL BUT WE'LL OFFER BONUSES FOR THEM WHAT GOES.
JOHN, YOU SEE TO THE PAPER-WORK, OKAY?
UHH--SURE.


NO CALLS.
BVE, START GATHERING THE TEAM FOR WHERE YOU WANT TO GO.
I'LL GO TALK WITH AMANDA.

YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT?
NO.
YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT ANYWAY?
IT'S GOING BAD, BEN. MY WHOLE IDEA. IT'S GONE WRONG -- RIGHT FROM THE START.
YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE TEAM LEADER, Y'KNOW.
YEAH WE BOTH KNOW WHY THAT WASN'T POSSIBLE
BECAUSE YOU'RE BLACK.
UH-UH. IT'S BECAUSE OF THE GAPS I GOT IN MY MEMORY.
IT'S BECAUSE NO ONE, INCLUDING ME, KNOWS JUST HOW FAR THE LEAGUE OF ASSASSINS CONDITIONED ME BACK WHEN I WAS BRAINWASHED.
UNTIL WE DO, EVEN I DON'T TRUST ME COMPLETELY.
WELL, I DON'T FULLY TRUST FLAG, NEVER DID!
BUT THEY STUCK ME WITH HIM!
DAMN WASHINGTON BUREAUCRATS!
THE COLONEL ISN'T THE PROBLEM. NEVER WAS -- EXCEPT TO YOU!
YOU GOING TO TALK ABOUT WHAT'S REALLY EATING YOU OR NOT?
SUIT YOURSELF. BUT SOONER OR LATER YOU'LL HAVE TO TALK TO SOMEONE, AMANDA!
OR YOU'RE GOING TO EXPLODE!

IT'S SOMETHING TO DO WITH WASHINGTON BUREAUCRATS BUT SHE'S NOT READY TO OPEN UP ABOUT IT YET.
WHATEVER THIS MISSION IS, EVE, WE MIGHT AS WELL GET IT ON WHILE WE CAN WHO'S GOING?
ASSUMING YOU'RE GOING--
I'M GOING.
THERE'S ME, JUNE MOONE AND HER ENCHANTING ALTER-EGO, DUCHESS, AND VIXEN. WE COULD USE MORE.
WHERE'S BOOMER-BUTT?
SAID--AND I QUOTE--"UP YOURS, SHEILA. I'M OFF ON HOLIDAY."
HE'S IN. LEAVE HIM TO ME. WHAT ABOUT DEADSHOT?
"HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO CONTACT HIM YET. HE'S HAVING A SESSION WITH HIS THERAPIST--MARNIE HERRS."
YOU'VE MISSED A FEW SESSIONS, FLOYD. I WAS BEGINNING TO WONDER IF YOU WERE EVER COMING BACK.
YEAH, WELL--BEEN BUSY. MISSIONS.
I--HADN'T REALIZED YOU'D BEEN MARRIED, FLOYD. AND HAD A SON. YOU'VE NEVER MENTIONED HIM.
WHY IS THAT?
IT'S OVER. I'M NO GOOD FOR THEM OR THEM FOR ME.
NO GOOD TALKING ABOUT IT.
WHY... WHY DID THE MARRIAGE... FAIL?
12

I NEVER PRETENDED WITH HER I WAS ANYTHING BUT WHAT I WAS.
SHE COULD NEVER SEE ME EXCEPT AS SHE WANTED ME TO BE
THIS ISN'T GOING TO WORK.
FLOYD! WAIT!

SLAM!

DEADSHOT SAYS HE'S IN. BEN'S LEFT TO TAKE CARE OF BOOMERANG. WHY DON'T YOU GET SOME SLEEP WHILE YOU CAN, EVE?

IF I CAN, FLO.

WELL, GIRL, THIS IS *WHY* YOU JOINED THE SQUAD -- TO SAVE YOUR BROTHER.

DEAR GOD, I HOPE I DON'T KILL *US* ALL IN THE ATTEMPT.

TO SEE THE FULL STORY BEHIND NIGHTSHADE AND HER BROTHER, CHECK OUT *SECRET ORIGINS #28*, WRITTEN BY -- BOB.G !

JUST FIND IT MIGHTY SUSPICIOUS, THAT'S ALL -- YER OFFERIN' TSTAND ME A DRINK.

WHAT'S SUSPICIOUS? I THOUGHT WE MIGHT GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER BETTER. HELP TEAM EFFICIENCY.

B.S.! Y'HATE ME *GUTS*.

OHHH, I WOULDN'T SAY *HATE*...

B.S.! YOU *ALL* HATE ME GUTS. LIKE I HATE YOURS.

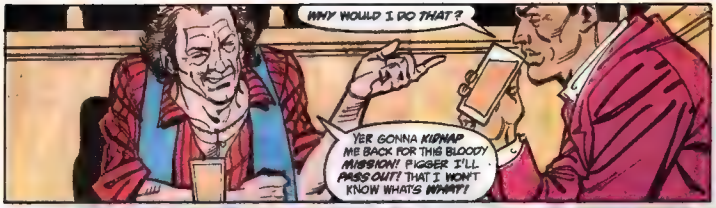
WAITRESS! ANOTHER ROUND FOR ME AND MY FRIEND. DOUBLES, PLEASE.

OF COURSE, THIS GOT *NUFFIN'* TO DO WITH THIS BLOODY MISSION EVE EDEN WAS BELLY-ACHIN' ABOUT

COINCIDENCE. KEEP THE CHANGE

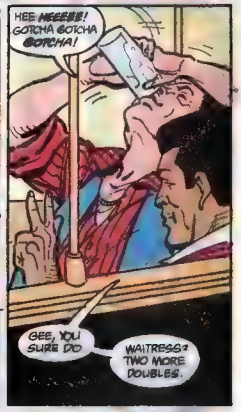
AH*HAH HAH*! I KNOW WHAT YER ON ABOUT!

DARK AS PORTER Y'MIGHT BE, BUT OL' *BOOMER* SEES THROUGH YA! YER TRYING TGET *ME DRUNK*!


WHY WOULD I DO THAT?
YER GONNA KIDNAP ME BACK FOR THIS BLOODY MISSION! FIGGER I'LL PASS OUT? THAT I WON'T KNOW WHAT'S WHAT!

HAW HAW! THE JOKE'S ON YOU, MATE! I C'N DRINK YOU LINNER TH' TABLE ANYTIME!
DOWN THE GULLET!
CHEERS.

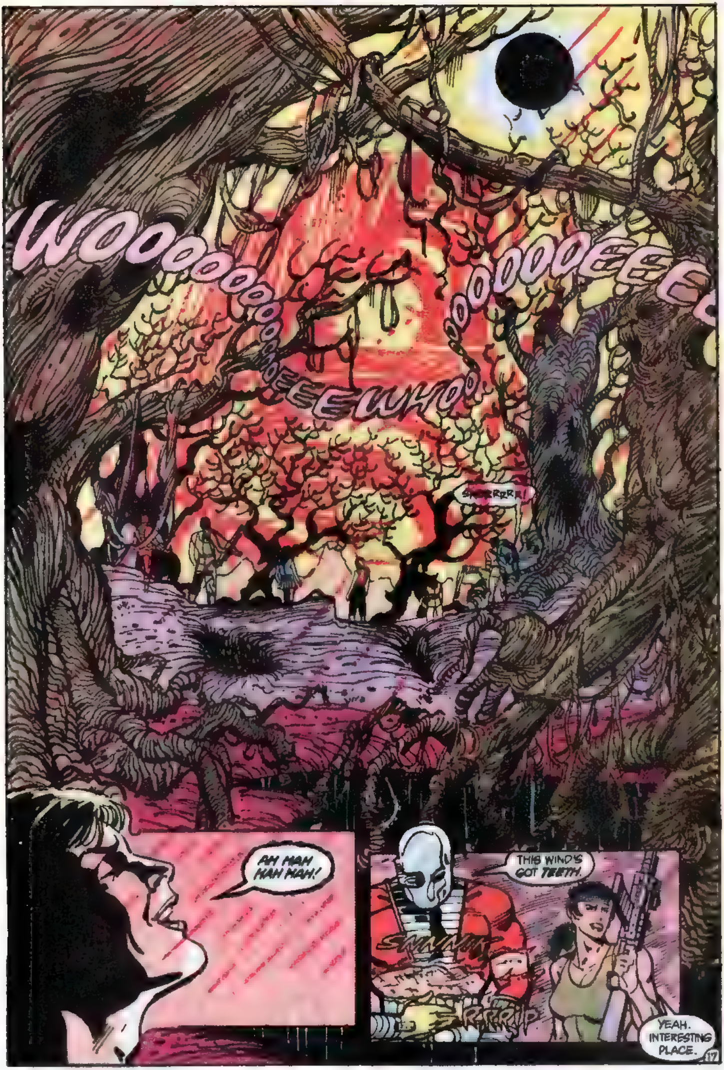
WOOOO! WOOOO! HA HAW! LOOKIT 'IM! HE'S HALF SLOSHED ALREADY! TRYING T' PRETEND HE'S STONE COLD SOBER! WOO!
Y'LOOK A PROPER FOOL, MATE! NOBODY'S BUYIN' IT!


HEE HEEEEE! GOTCHA GOTCHA GOTCHA!
GEE, YOU SURE DO
WAITRESS? TWO MORE DOUBLES.

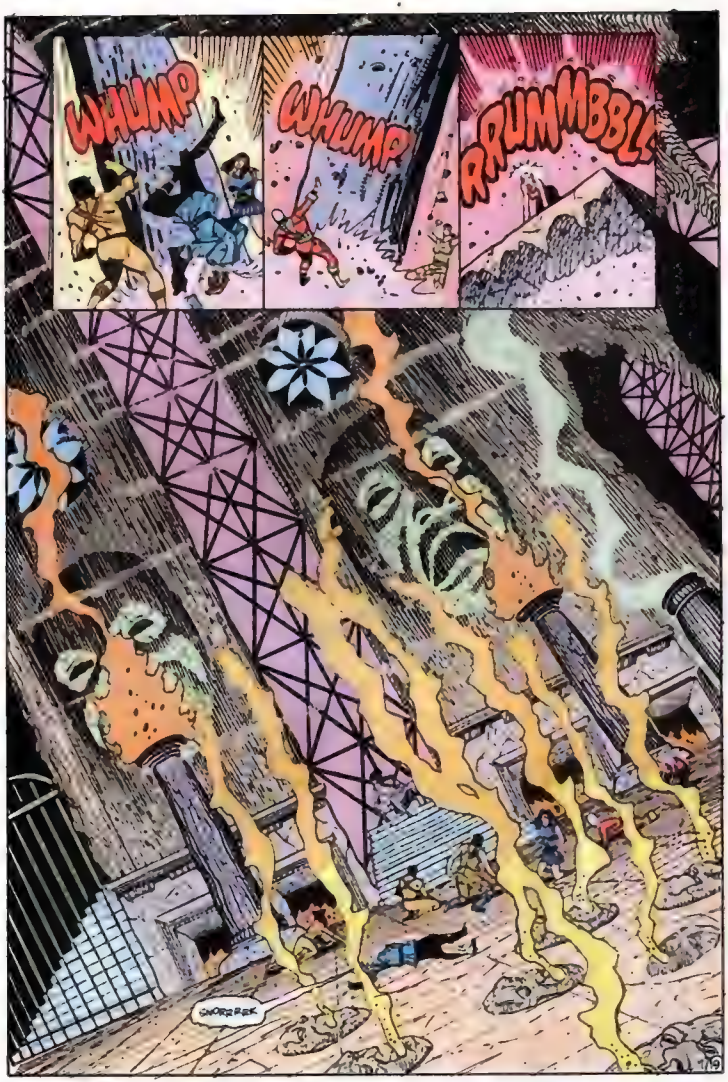
THUNK

CANCEL THAT.
ZZZORK

OKAY, I GUESS THIS IS IT.
I'VE TOLD YOU ALL SOMETHING OF MYSELF AND WHAT WE'LL BE DEALING WITH. I'LL SAVE THE THANK YOUS UNTIL WE GET BACK.
ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS?
LET'S GET GOING THEN.
TZZZ TZZZ TZZZ
VOOMP!
TZZZORK!
GOOD LUCK...!
TZZZ TZZZ TZZZ
VOOMP!
*MY NAME IS JUNE MOONE AND I'M AFRAID. THAT'S NOTHING NEW. I SPEND MOST OF MY DAYS BEING AFRAID. BUT I'M APPROACHING MORTAL TERROR AT A SPEED I CAN'T BEGIN TO CALCULATE.
*I CAN'T CONTROL PART OF WHO I AM. I CAME ALONG BECAUSE EVE SAYS SHE NEEDS MY HELP --OR THE HELP OF THAT PART OF MYSELF I CAN'T CONTROL. EVE'S BEEN A GOOD FRIEND I COULDN'T SAY NO.
*BUT THE CLOSER WE GET TO WHERE WE'RE GOING, THE MORE MY TERROR INCREASES. IF I COULD, I'D GO BACK. IT'S THE JOY, YOU SEE--THE JOY I FEEL WITHIN ME THAT COMES FROM THE PART OF ME I CAN'T CONTROL.
"IT'S GOING HOME."
TZZZ TZZZ TZZZ
WHOOMP!
MERCIFUL GOD IN HEAVEN!


WOOOOOOOOOOOOEEEEWHOOOOOOOOOEEEE
AH HAH HAH HAH!
THIS WIND'S GOT TEETH.
YEAH. INTERESTING PLACE.

OKAY, WHERE DO WE START LOOKING FOR YOUR BROTHER?
I...I DON'T KNOW...IT'S ALL SO CHANGED...!
DO NOT... WORRY...
WE ARE... ABOUT TO BE... FOUND!
RRRUMMMMMBLE
SHOOMP
SHOOOMP
SHOOMP


WHUMP
WHUMP
RRUMMBBL!
SHORRRRK

IT'S... THE DHAZMOR!
EVE, IT'S THE DHAZMOR!
WHO?!
THE DUDE THAT GAVE JUNE HER POWERS-- LET HER BECOME THE ENCHANTRESS. YOU SURE YOU BROUGHT US TO THE RIGHT PLACE?
WHAT'S ME DOING HERE?!
YOU...SHOULD NOT... HAVE COME HERE, CHILD! YOU...OR SISTER-SELF!
TRAP...SET BY INCUBUS...!
SHRRRH!
RRRRHHH!
RRRRHHHHHHHHHH
20

SOMEONE'S COMING!
CLAK
KLATCH
SHOOM!
AIIIII!
JUNE!
AHHH!
WHOMP
UNGGH!
WHUMP

NEXT: DEVIL TO PAY!

SUICIDE NOTES

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Dear Squad Leaders,

SUICIDE SQUAD #10 was what I would call a real thriller-diller of a completely different kind. I had no idea who I should cheer for. Here's a hero putting in some hard work and we all had to watch him get egg on his face. Poor Bats. And you could tell he was not happy at the end of the story. I have never seen such contained frustration, as when Darth Vader watched the *Millennium Falcon* slip through his fingers at the end of *The Empire Strikes Back*. Remember that? Same feeling. Dramatic huffy exit with cape trailing and everything.

I mean, the book was worth the price alone for the look Batman gave Deadshot on page 21, panel one. Look at the total disgust with these people Bats has. Look at those beady eyes. Look at that frown of total loathing. And the rest of him shrouded in dark. Gives me shivers. Like The Joker said once, "Is that a face even a mother could love?"

There were other high points: Amanda Waller packing a gun; the Batman/Deadshot confrontation, the Priest's personality ... as well as the overall attention to detail. This is a book where people who are injured actually do have to spend time in infirmaries. Good.

Let me say, I am a Bob *Lewis fan*. If I ever hear any more complaints about him, I will personally get a job in the post office and reroute all complainers' letters. Don't make me. Bob gives this book a mood that precious few vet inkers would be able to catch. Hang in there, Bob.

Seth Ball
No Address Given

*****

Dear Bob,

We got some problems here.

The Batman would never make the mistakes portrayed in SUICIDE SQUAD #10. I know writers take a bit of liberty with characters or situations to make certain stories work, or at the very least easier to swallow, but no one is going to accept "Up Against the Wall" and its version of the Dark Knight.

My chief problem was, of course, the fingerprints supposedly left by "Matches" Malone in his cell. I realize Bruce Wayne was going to great pains in order to preserve the integrity of his mission, but Bruce Wayne would not leave fingerprints. He's been at this kind of thing for far too long to make such a silly mistake. Further, he would leave no evidence lying around at the scene of the crime, either, such as empty diskette containers.

Furthermore, John Ostrander is not that sloppy a writer.

Others may laud you on showing us a fallible, more human Batman, but I doubt it. In order to make such a story believable certain fundamental aspects of character must be employed, and Batman's attention to minute detail is the *most* fundamental of his attributes. This version simply doesn't cut it.

So ... who *was* that masked man, anyway?

Since Batman doesn't make mistakes of this magnitude, and Ostrander is not a sloppy writer, and especially since Bob Greenberger respects his readers entirely too much to even try a thing like this, it's logical to assume this man wasn't the Batman—not the real one anyway.

Or if indeed this was the Batman, he left those "clues" purposely, and this issue is merely the beginning of a multi-parter that will see its culmination in the JLI/SS crossover that Keith Giffen keeps hyping.

Other than that little snafu, SUICIDE SQUAD is still progressing nicely. I am much impressed with Ostrander's characterizations, and McDonnell's and Lewis's art improves each issue.

Again, correct me if I'm wrong, but I seem to see a pattern emerging. There seems to be less emphasis on the "bad guys" as more "good guys" flock to the Squad. If this is the case, I heartily endorse it. The idea of convicts serving their government (not their country, as the government seems oblivious to right and wrong as portrayed in SS, VIGILANTE, CAPTAIN ATOM and the DOOM PATROL) will not stand up under close scrutiny for very long, for exactly the reasons "Batman" cited.

Government agents, on secret missions, however, will nicely coincide with the rest of the goings-on in the other DC magazines. The core members of the Squad (Flag, Bronze Tiger, Nightshade, Enchantress and Deadshot) still has its share of felons and others could be enlisted as missions dictate. But the use of the Vixen, Speedy and Black Orchid next issue shows a healthy response to "Batman"'s allegations this month, and effectively makes the Squad more a super *team* as opposed to being a super *group*. Think about it.

C.P. Cagle
2308 Halls Hill Pike
Murfreesboro, TN 37130

So the conversation went something like this. I called Johnny O up and ask, "Hey, John Baby, just about all the mail nails us on this fingerprints business. What's your defense?" After a few moments of fevered thought, John stammers, "He never intended to be caught. He wanted to sneak into the computer files, download what he needed and then go back to his cell. Before 'Matches' was to be transferred the next day, he would have cleaned the incriminating evidence. He never figured on the security being so good, yeah, that's the ticket." Okay, so we pause a moment. "What about C.P.'s comments about the disc wrapper?" A long silence. "Okay, Bob, we goofed. I admit it." So do I. It was the real Batman, and we goofed. Sorry.

*****

Dear People,

I understand the difficulties involved in taking a group of villains, who usually are looking in a certain ethical/moral standard of conduct jump through Mrs. Waller's hoops. Balancing the necessary power of the combined group versus the level of power of the threat with which the Suicide Squad has been assigned to deal should be very difficult; if the Squad members are more powerful than their adversary or adversaries then the "stick," i.e. having one's arm blown off, becomes useless. Thus the "Suicide" in the Suicide Squad; the Squad's strength should be matched almost perfectly with the strength of the threat, producing fatalities. Even failures.

So far the missions have been ... well, too easy. Very few villains have died considering the dangers involved. The government uses the Squad for very dangerous assignments for which they cannot use their normal operatives; presumably because the government's operatives are either not powerful enough to deal with the threat, or are not considered expendable. More of the Suicide Squad should be dying.

Next we come to the subject of secrecy. A wise man once said that once a secret is known by three people, the whole world knows. Unfortunately, lots more than three people know

about the Squad, and most of these are criminals who have been members. Once they have served their time, they are free, and in practice free to reveal anything they wish to concerning the Squad. Granted, some will consider the alternative of harassment to be enough to keep the secret, and some will undoubtably wish for the Squad to continue as that in the event that their subsequent schemes fail they can still get their sentences reduced by serving as members. Still, there are going to be a lot of ex-operatives which will not be quiet, especially if they can trade that information to heroes or Congressmen, or even Lois Lane.

David Medinnus
PO Box 8183
San Jose, CA 95155

*****

Dear Robert, John, Luke, Bob, Todd and Julianna,

One of the highlights of FIRESTORM ANNUAL #5 was the Batman's encounter with Col. Rick Flag, and Rick's regret at working with Deadshot instead of the Darknight Detective. In his one-on-one of pages 17-18 of SUICIDE SQUAD #10 and most particularly in his tirade of page 22, you showed why he *has* to lead the Squad. I mean no respect to the Bronze Tiger, but the Colonel is the man for the job—and this is the best way for him to "carry on" for Karin Grace.

Apart from the reinstatement of Flag as leader, "Up Against the Wall" was more memorable for its sub-plots than for the Batman's infiltration of Belle Reve. Not that that wasn't handled well—the Batman's effect on Deadshot and Mrs. Waller's trust in his word were perfect—but I was more intrigued by Mark Shaw's new career (I hope he finds Argent) and the formidable Duchess to say nothing of Father Craemer and "Murph" Murphy. Develop these people in upcoming issues—and keep the Batman around as a threat, along with Flo's interest in Ben Turner and Marnie's interest in Floyd Lawton.

Is the Duchess Lashina—perhaps with amnesia? Eveh if she's not, I'd like to make a request for more female Squaders. Nightshade has been absent too long and the Enchantress adds sheer power to a group which might otherwise only be the I.M. Force in special clothes. The line-up for #11 is therefore very welcome, even if Speedy will be filling in for Col. Flag.

Julianna Ferriter's coloring was as fine as Carl Gafford's—is she just filling in, or is she taking over?

Charles J. Sperling
37-15 Parsons Boulevard Apt. 4C
Flushing, NY 11354

Julianna bailed us out of deadline squeezes in issues nine and 10 and we thank her but Carl remains the colorist of record.

We have been trying to keep the team more evenly balanced between heroes and villains and men and women. With our upcoming line-ups, we think you'll be pleased.

*****

Dear John, Luke, Bob, Todd, Julianna, and Bob,

"Up Against the Wall" was your best issue yet! No doubt about it! I'd say with the Batman's capabilities and the resources of the Suicide Squad these two opponents were pretty evenly matched, so it was fun to see Bats infiltrate the Squad's headquarters as "Matches" Malone and "the Wall" manage to catch him doing it! The plot was simple, direct and powerful: two philosophies of crimefighting pitted against each other, neither one completely right nor completely wrong. Who says heroes have to agree with each other's methods? And Amanda is a different kind of hero, all right. I'd say "Matches" has met his match in her. The final two pages were the most unforgettable I've read in comics in a long time! I especially gained a new respect for Rick Flag, as Amanda did. It was great to see him come back to life after mourning for Karin.

This was also a great way to meet the supporting cast of minor characters; Murph, the Chaplain, Flo and the rest. I especially enjoyed the Duchess, since there aren't too many female hulks in comics, nor ones that can almost get the better of the Batman in a fight! I'm looking forward to finding out more about her as time goes on.

It was apparent that Luke and Bob were excited about the book's guest star, 'cause the art was terrific! Page 11 was outstanding, and the fight scenes between the Dark Knight and the Duchess, Deadshot and Rick Flag were splendid. Jerry Bingham's cover was great also!

My only complaint about the book was seeing Mark Shaw dumped so soon after the MILLENNIUM plotlines and deciding to keep the same name Manhunter when we've had our fill of that sobriquet in the last few months! I thought he was rather unique as the Privateer.

Neil Ahlquist
1100 Washington Street NE Apt. 2
Minneapolis, MN 55413

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Dear Bob,

"Up Against the Wall" was not an overly fantastic issue, but it was good. Once again, John's characters are so alive. We meet Murph, a realist who doesn't like his job and Father Craemer, who wants to work with criminals. I look forward to seeing both these characters again. Rick Flag shows more of his inner self and I'm glad that Amanda listened to what he said and subsequently put him back in charge.

Unfortunately, Manhunter has left. Fortunately, it is a mission to find Argent, among other things. I like his character and hope to see him return to these pages soon. Duchess is also a welcome addition. She is a female Rambo and would be a big asset to missions. As for Batman now knowing about the Squad, that could be very dangerous. I'm glad the Squad was able to stand him off. I realize that this event sets up the meeting with JLI, which should be interesting.

I'm looking forward to the inclusion of Vixen, because she is a good character and Luke draws her so well. The appearance of Speedy is also good, as well as the return of Black Orchid, Nightshade, Captain Boomerang and Enchantress. I'm also looking for the Special and next year's annual (yes, already!).

Justin Steiner
6450 West 1000 North
DeMotte, IN 46310

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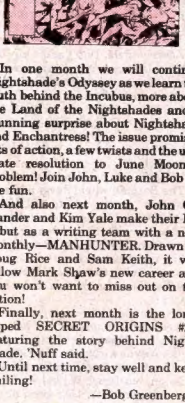
COMING ATTRACTIONS



In one month we will continue Nightshade's Odyssey as we learn the truth behind the Incubus, more about the Land of the Nightshades and a stunning surprise about Nightshade and Enchantress! The issue promises lots of action, a few twists and the ultimate resolution to June Moone's problem! Join John, Luke and Bob for the fun.

And also next month, John Ostrander and Kim Yale make their DC debut as a writing team with a new monthly—MANHUNTER. Drawn by Doug Rice and Sam Keith, it will follow Mark Shaw's new career and you won't want to miss out on the action!

Finally, next month is the long-hyped SECRET ORIGINS #28, featuring the story behind Nightshade. 'Nuff said.

Until next time, stay well and keep smiling!

—Bob Greenberger

PUBLISHORIAL

JENETTE • KAHN

"Comics," I'm saying, "are as close to movies and television as any medium can get. You tell stories in pictures and words and so do we. Plot, characterization, dialogue, all these are tools of our trade. It's true that we're missing music, but on the other hand we have an unlimited special effects budget. Why, we can destroy a planet in one panel and redraw it in the next."

I am in Hollywood trying to convince a studio executive to option one or more of our properties for a feature film. And what I'm doing at this moment is pitching, that is, trying to sell the concept, first by demonstrating that comics by their very nature lend themselves to movie-making, then by making the idea of a particular property sound especially exciting.

When I first started going to L. A. two and one-half years ago, doors were not so readily open to comic book publishers. But producer Peter Guber, who figures very significantly in our DC life, did me one of many favors. He introduced me to entertainment lawyer Ken Ziffren who knows every studio head in town. Kenny, in turn, wrote each one of these studio heads asking them to meet with me. So suddenly I had entree into the most important offices in Hollywood. And I started pitching.

At that time, only Superman, Batman, and Swamp Thing were under option. In other words, one party or another had paid us money for the exclusive right for a certain period of time to try to make a movie of these characters. Three Superman movies had been made and a Swamp Thing feature as well. Batman had been in development for five years, which meant that any number of directors and writers were trying to come up with a script that the studio—Warner Bros.—thought was good enough to turn into a multi-million dollar movie.

I began making the rounds and soon we had many more pictures in development: Plastic Man, Blackhawk, Sgt. Rock, the Flash, Watchmen. I sold (that is, sold the option to develop) Wonder Woman and Teen Titans to CBS Productions only to have that feature-making arm of CBS close down, a Hollywood good news/bad news joke.

But since I started a major change has taken place. Now a number of producers and young studio executives have become comic book fans. When we publish a *Dark Knight* or a *Watchmen*, my phone jumps off the hook with congratulatory calls coming in from Los Angeles.

Take the case of *Watchmen*. Two years ago I had dinner with Alan Moore in London. He'd not yet begun to write *Watchmen*, but he had worked out the entire concept with which he regaled me and my then-husband. The story was rivetting. "Alan," I said, "if you can write up a synopsis of this idea, I feel certain I can sell it as a movie."

Even before *Watchmen* 1 was printed, when I just had the photocopies of the black and white art, I began to send the first issue to Hollywood people I knew would be fans. The word of mouth started. I followed *Watchmen* 1 as soon as I could with the second issue. By the time issue 3 was out I had people clamoring to make *Watchmen* into a movie. And I hadn't yet begun to sell.

In the course of my Hollywood travels, I had become extremely good friends with a young executive at CBS named Ileen Maisel. When CBS Productions folded, Ileen ended up at Taft-Barish where she continued to champion our properties. Ileen was one of the first people to understand the uniqueness and excitement of *Watchmen*. Always in hyperdrive, she put her total commitment into trying to persuade Taft-Barish to make *Watchmen* into a movie.

Taft-Barish expressed interest but wasn't totally committed to the project. In order to help persuade her company, Ileen showed *Watchmen* to producer Joel Silver, hoping that Joel's enthusiasm would convince them. This made sense since Joel, at thirty-five, is a Hollywood madman with a hot reputation. He loves movies and has made some hugely successful ones, among them *48 Hours*, *Lethal Weapon*, and *Predator*.

Joel was on an airplane when he gave me a call. "Jenette," he pleaded and harangued, "you've got to give me *Watchmen*. Look, I know you don't know me, but I'm a terrific producer. I've made—actually gotten made—eight movies in three years. I love this property. I can see it. The comic's brilliant. Why the whole movie is practically storyboarded already."

And then he mentioned the sugar cubes. "I love the stuff this guy is doing! All the details, like the trail of the sugar, where Rorschach empties Dreiberg's canister, then the wrappers are on the floor, then what's-her-name, Laurie, wants some sugar in her coffee..."?

I was impressed. It didn't mean much to me that Joel loved *Watchmen*. I figured that any person of taste in his or her right mind would be knocked out by the work. But to notice and appreciate a small but telling series of details like the sugar cubes, that showed a keen understanding of the comics. Coupled with his insight on *Watchmen*, his own argument was the most persuasive one. He *did* get pictures made. I decided to let Joel be the producer of *Watchmen*.

Despite Ileen's enthusiasm, we ultimately pitched *Watchmen* to 20th-Century Fox where Joel had a long-term relationship. Scott Rudin, the head of production for Fox, loved the project. We were in business.

Now there was the question of the writer. My vote was for Sam Hamm. Sam is thirty-one and Southern. "One of the Virginia Hamm's," he cracks in a light ironic drawl. His wife's name is Nan. When you get their answering machine, the tape whirrs out: "Hello, you've reached Sam and Nan Hamm." Sam says that Nan's married name is Bacon.

Sam is the brilliant writer of *Batman*, a movie about which I promise to tell you more in upcoming weeks. *Batman* is my favorite script of the moment. It has pacing and action and verve, brilliant characterization, hip dialogue, and a weird, dark tone. Sam manages to tell not one but three separate origin stories—the Batman's, the Joker's, and Robin's—and still subordinate them to a larger, streamlined plot. And best of all, he's been true to the grim essence of the Batman, giving us a movie dramatically opposed to the Sixties TV show, a film noir.

I began to send Sam issues of *Watchmen* before it was published which, as a major comic book fan himself, he devoured eagerly. Joel read Sam's *Batman* and agreed he'd do a great job on *Watchmen*. The problem was to convince Sam that he should write the *Watchmen* movie and at the same time to convince 20th Century Fox that there was no better writer for the project that Sam. It took us months to get to that point, because Sam was besieged with other offers, and because Fox had to arrive at mutually satisfactory financial terms with Sam's agent Dave Warden.

But now Sam's writing, after Joel and I went to England to see Alan and Dave and after Sam spent some time with Alan in May. Sam loves *Watchmen* more (if it's possible) than Joel. It was incredibly hard to get him to agree to do the project. He was, if anything, too much in awe of what Alan and Dave had done. What convinced him to do it, reports Sam, "is that if I didn't say 'yes', someone else would screw it up worse than I would."

Pretty soon, we will be watching *Watchmen*.

Jenette

PRESIDENT & PUBLISHER, DC COMICS

DC LIST

THIS WEEK

BATMAN: YEAR ONE
A hardcover collection of the Frank Miller–David Mazzuchelli classic, recolored and with new cover art. ►◫

WASTELAND 7
"The Great St. Louis Electrical Giraffe Caper," the weirdest trip to the Wasteland yet. ►◆▲

NEW TEEN TITANS 44
Godiva is back, and the Titans meet Danny Chase's mysterious grandfather. ►◆

POWER GIRL 1 *(of 4)*
Beginning a four-part story reintroducing Power Girl, her friends and a very old foe. ●►

SUICIDE SQUAD 14
Beginning "Nightshade's Odyssey" as she returns home with the team to find her brother. ●

CAPTAIN ATOM 15
The Red Tornado is now an elemental force of nature against mankind—can Captain Atom and JLI stop it? ●

QUESTION 17
Vic Sage is in the dumps—can THE WATCHMEN change his mind? ►◆▲

SONIC DISRUPTORS 6 *(of 12)*
The federal forces strike back with Karmanal of Zirt in the middle. ►◆▲

AQUAMAN SPECIAL 1
Aquaman gambles his soul against the machinations of the evil Magus! ►●

PHANTOM 2 *(of 4)*
The 13th Phantom's high seas adventures continue as today's *Ghost Who Walks* stalks his prey in Manhattan.

SPECTRE 15
To save Madame Xanadu and Kim, Spectre and Corrigan enter the Tarot deck! ►■▲

WANDERERS 1
They were the 30th century's other great heroes. What happened to them? Beginning an all-new series of adventures. ►■

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION 5 *(of 6)*
Geordi is dead, Q wants to die and the colonists run rampant—the concluding chapter. ●

DETECTIVE COMICS 587
Batman visits the dark side of the American dream as he investigates the homeless. ●

LEGEND

● Standard Format
■ New Format
◆ Deluxe Format
► Available at Select Outlets
★ Prestige Format
□ Graphic Novel
◫ Collected Edition
▲ Suggested for Mature Readers